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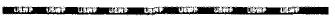
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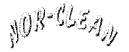
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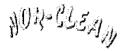
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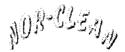
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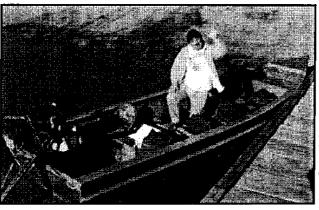
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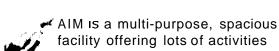
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Wednesday, December 11, 2002



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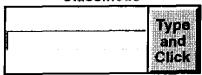
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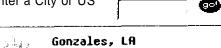


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Strip club owners vow to fight restrictions

Supporters of the parish's new law regulating sexually oriented businesses left last week's Parish Council meeting in Donaldsonville pleased with the council's decision. but aware that the matter may end up in court.

More of this story

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Strip club owners vow to tight restrictions

ocal News

By Darlene Denstorff The Ascension Citizen

Sports

Supporters of the parish's new law regulating sexually oriented businesses left last week's Parish Council meeting in Donaldsonville pleased with the council's decision, but aware that the matter may end up in court.

Dituaries

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Attorneys for the owners of local clubs were busy this week preparing to tile injunctions in federal court to stop the new law from getting on the books.

About Us

The new law puts stricter regulations on local gentlemen's clubs including requiring the clubs to be licensed as sexually oriented businesses and prohibiting patrons from placing tips on the dancers' bodies.

Health

The council adopted the new law Dec. 5 with only Councilman Shafter Kling voicing objection. Two weeks ago, the council voted to delay action on the matter in a 6-5 vote with council chairman Thomas "Moose" Pearce voting to break a 5-5 tie.

own Hall

ntertainment

orld News

Stocks

This time, Pearce said before the discussion on the matter that **he** wanted to make it clear that he "supported the law then and I support it tonight." Pearce said he voted to table the matter because he wanted more information on legal aspects of the law. He said he had met several residents and had assured them he was in support of the law.

While supporters say the new law will not shut down the clubs, opponents are calling the provision a "death penalty" for the five gentlemen's clubs in the parish.

Kathryn Goppelt and other members of the Ascension Family Forum presented the council with a proposal in June to enforce stricter regulations on sexually oriented businesses. The parish's Strategic Planning Committee heard the issue and both sides attended the meetings held to discuss the two laws - one regulating where the clubs can locate and the other dealing with licensing of the clubs as sexually oriented businesses. The zoning law was adopted unanimously last month without discussion.

Kling, who said the gentlemen's clubs "are surely not for me," said he felt it was not fair for a small group of people to try to legislate morality in the parish.

"If you think they'll (supporters of the law) stop here, you're fooling yourself," Kling said, adding that he has been told the group would like to make Ascension Parish dry parish.

Prior to the Dec. 5 vote, Goppelt said the law was "clean, constitutional and court-tested." She **said** that while the ordinance would not stop sexually oriented businesses from operating in the parish it would stop casual sexual contact between the dancer and the patrons and prevent the secondary negative effects of strip clubs.

She said a not-for-profit legal foundation has agreed to defend the parish against any lawsuits. Parish legal advisor Jessie LeBlanc explained after the meeting that the Attorney General would have to approve the parish's request to accept the offer of free legal help from the Louisiana Law and Justice Foundation.

Mark Simmons, attorney for Escapades, warned councilmen "you get what you pay for." After the meeting, Simmons said be would be filing for a temporary restraining order against the new law.

Mark Stermer told councilmen that a vote against the law would be "a vote for live pornography." He added that a majority of parish residents want the new restrictions placed on these types of businesses.

Jay Triche, owner of Capital Utilities, questioned why the council did not consider "grandfathering" existing businesses and allow them to operate under present law. He said his office is located next to Cinnamin's and that since 1999he has seen his property values increase four fold. He said the community has not deteriorated because of the clubs, but instead grown with a discount giant planning on locating across the street and 12 new subdivisions locating in the area from 1993-1996. Triche also said he has not seen any sign of crime increasing in the area.

Whit Cook, a Baton Rouge attorney representing Cinnamin's and Cinnamin's Secrets, said the proponents of the law are "asking you to ignore existing facts." He said the supporters of the law have not presented any facts that the clubs have caused problems in the parish.

"It's not rational, it's not reasonable and it's irrelevant," Cook said Monday of the use of studies from other areas. He said that while the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that communities do not have to perform their own studies on secondary negative effects, that case dealt with a community that did not have any existing gentlemen's clubs. He said Ascension Parish has had these types of businesses for more than 35 years and no proof was presented pointing to a local

problem

Cook said the new law will close the doors of the existing clubs because the dancers, who will likely not be able to earn as much money in tips, will Icave.

Cook said he plans to file suit in federal court before the end of the year. He will ask for a temporary restraining order to stop the new rules from becoming law.

Proponent Lou Goppelt said the law is needed to prevent folks like Larry Flynt, publisher of Hustler magazine, from locating clubs in the area. Goppelt said the proposed westbank transportation center could attract such proprietors.

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Ascension Citizen

Home

Signature events mark beginning of Christmas season

Local News

By Darlene Denstorff and Peter Waguespack The Ascension Citizen

Sports

Santa and his helpers left the North Pole last week to officially kick off the holiday season in Ascension Parish with visits to several popular events on both sides of the Mississippi River.

Obituaries

Massifieds

Rain did not stop more than 500 hundred folks from turning out Dec. 3 for the City of Gonzales' annual Jambalaya Country Christmas Tree Lighting Party in Jambalaya Park. Santa stayed dry under the park's new pavilion, and bright-eyed kids lined up to whisper in Santa's ear and receive a gift.

About Us

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According to Mayor Johnny Herthelot, the only thing missing from the park's inaugural event was the woman who came up with the idea of hosting an event for kids in the park in the first place, Delores Girouard.

Health

Entertainment

Girouard, a long-time member of the Gonzales Tourist Commission, passed away recently, but Berthelot said he was sure she was "smiling down on us the other night."

Town Hall

Norld News

Berthelot said a permanent marker honoring her contributions will soon be placed at Jambalaya Park.

Stocks

Hundreds of Santa's helpers lined up that same night in the Gonzales Wal-Mart to shop for less fortunate-kids as part of the Ascension Sheriffs Office's annual Christmas Crusade for Children.

Lake Elementary students Sarah Blank and Emily Hutchinson spent most of their shopping time down the Barbie aisle trying to get the most for the \$25 limit set for each needy child. Louisiana Technical College student Liz Baluch said she enjoyed shopping for a good cause.

The jolly red-suited big guy was back in town Sunday for the Chamber of Commerce Christmas Parade. **Folks** started lining up along the parade route as early as 9 a.m. to get the perfect spot from which to view the annual parade. This year's theme was The Songs of Christmas.

Ascension College's entry won Best of Show. Other winners included: children's division, first place, Boy Scout Pack 76; second place, Faith Academy 4-H; and third, St. Amant Cubettes. Civic Division: first place, Gonzales Boat Club; second place, Nemesis Riders; and third place, River Parishes Community College.

Glenn Shaheen and Associates, Inc. took top honors in the commercial division with Welsh Funeral Home taking second and On-Line Deck and Academy Painting winning third place.

In the industrial division, Shell Chemical won first place, Vulcan Chemical was second and Air Liquide American Corp. won third. The religious division found Church United for Community Development was first, First United Methodist second and St. Theresa third. The Cajun Country Miniatures took first place in the equestrian division with VIP Farms winning second and Ascension Parish Fair Association taking third.

Over in Donaldsonville, residents, visitors and tourists alike were treated to a fun-filled weekend celebrating the Christmas season.

The Merchants Association for the Advancement of Donaldsonville (MAAD) Open House culminated Saturday with an array of fun-tilled events. Gary Joseph played the saxophone while the mother-and-daughter team of Becky and Melissa Perera sang Christmas carols. Door **prizes** were given away.

Children of all ages were treated to Santa's Workshop at the Historic Donaldsonville Museum. Children's events included face-painting, coloring and visiting with Santa Claus. Local artist Alvin Batiste was on hand throughout the day at the museum on Saturday demonstrating his style of painting.

Also on Saturday, the annual Donaldsonville Christmas Parade sponsored by the Donaldsonville Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Information Center rolled through the city's streets. Santa, of course, was the main attraction for the kids.

The Donaldsonville Christmas Committee sponsored a live Nativity scene celebrating the birth of Jesus right outside the museum. Kids were afforded the opportunity to take free portraits next to the nativity. Hot dogs and snacks were provided for the kids. The Donaldsonville High School marching band also took part in the festivities.

Also, the Louisiana Vintage Dancers performed in front of a large crowd in Donaldsonville's Crescent Park. The dancers were dressed in 1860s attire. They performed their traditional "Bonfire Dance" during the event.

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Ascension Citizen

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Clerks' letter goes unanswered by state elections officials

Local News

By Darlene Denstorff The Ascension Citizen

Sports

Officials with the Commissioner of Elections office are not commenting on a faxed letter Commissioner Suzanne Terrell received last week from 13 clerks of court complaining about problems they have had in the election process since Terrell took office two years ago.

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"I have not seen the official document and I don't respond to faxed things," said Terrell's chief of staff, Pat Bergeron.

About Us

Ascension Clerk of Court Kermit "Hart" Bourque said the letter was sent because clerks across the state have questions about changes Terrell has made since taking office in 2000 that resulted in reduced staff and other cost-cutting measures.

Health

Bourque said the timing of the letter had nothing to do with politics or Terrell's run for the Senate.

Town Hall

ntertainment

"This was not a political issue with my office," Bourque said, adding that he thought the letter was going to be sent after the election.

World News

The letter was faxed to Terrell's office Dec. 2.

Stocks

Bourque said budget cuts implemented by Terrell resulted in fewer machine mechanics and no new training materials needed for commissioners. He said the outdated training materials did not address new equipment put in place in the last two years.

"We're operating in a system eight to 10 years old and many of the training guides do not apply to the new machines we use in Ascension," Bourque said.

The letter cites problems with improper installation of ballots, outdated training materials, problems with storing voting machines, inadequate pay for commissioners and voters being improperly locked out of certain elections.

Bourque said clerks with the Board of Directors of the Louisiana

Clerks of Court Association signed the letter after two years of not heing able to yet a meeting with Terrell.

"Why would she not want to meet with the clerks who handle elections in this state?" Bourque asked. He added that clerks have had meetings with members of her staff, but efforts to set up meetings with Terrell have been unsuccessful.

He said clerks have been discussing sending the letter for more than a year, long before she decided to run for the U.S. Senate.

Bourque said Terrell made much in her campaign of the fact that she worked to eliminate her office. Bourque pointed out that the legislature was going to eliminate her office whether or not she was elected.

"It had nothing to do with her, it was going to be merged with the Secretary of State's office anyway," Bourque said.

Bourque highlighted his concerns with Terrell earlier this year when he spoke before the Ascension Chamber of Commerce. He said Terrell seemed to have a problem with the way clerks were doing business, but did not take the time to meet with the clerks to go over her concerns.

Terrell lost her bid for U.S. Senate over the weekend.

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